DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 300 598 CE 051 237

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TITLE Teaching Adults: Myths and Realities. Summary from Cincinnati.
PUB DATE 10 Oct 88
NOTE 6p.; Outline summary of a group session held at the conference "Teaching Adults: Myths and Realities" (Cincinnati, OH, October 7-8, 1988).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; *Adult Educators; *Adult Students; *Student Characteristics; *Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Improvement; Teacher Qualifications; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This document is a summary of the collective product of a session at an adult education seminar. It lists first reasons why individuals attended the session. Next, characteristics of a good teacher are listed. Other lists cover these topics: techniques to improve teaching, characteristics of adult learners, reasons adults return to school, and tips for teaching. (YLB)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

October 10, 1988

TO:

FROM: Larry G. McDougle, Ph.D.
Dean for Instruction

RE: Summary from Cincinnati

I want to thank each of you for attending my session at the Adult Education seminar sponsored by the University of Cincinnati, October 7-8, 1988. Your enthusiastic participation made it a very enjoyable hour for me.

As promised, I am sending you a summary of our collective product. Very little attempt will be made to provide commentary. I have taken the liberty of adding a few additional items that come to mind. My hope is that what is here (along with the handouts that were distributed) will serve as a resource to you and help to stimulate your thinking as you pursue these topics.

One more disclaimer: no attempt has been made to rank order these responses. You will have to set your own priorities.

General consensus as to why individuals attended the session:

- obtain tips on how to better teach adults
- learn ways to improve teaching techniques with low-level learners in individual and small group settings
- gain insights into adult learner needs
- increase ability to relate to adult learners
- suggestions for teaching formats other than lecturing
- looking for ways to make teaching more fun, exciting, and challenging
- looking for ideas on how to train other instructors

Characteristics of a good teacher:

- RULE NUMBER 1: HAVE FUN!!!!
- enthusiastic (enjoys what he/she is doing and gets excited about it)
- committed to the teaching profession (willing to work hard to make it a successful venture) EDITORIAL COMMENT: the only place success comes before work is in the dictionary

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Characteristics of a Good Teacher Continued

- show interest in your students (let them know you want them to be successful...their success will be a measure of your success)
- willing to listen and learn from your students
- view education as a joint enterprise
- flexible (remember there is generally more than one way to make a point)
- adept at establishing good rapport with a class
- sensitive to student needs
- knowledge of subject matter (shouldn't be taken for granted)
- stays up-to-date with subject matter and the profession
- sense of humor
- avoid use of sarcasm
- non-judgmental (attack the argument, not the individual)
- communicate at appropriate level (never "talk down" to a class)
- treat students as adults
- exercise patience
- available/approachable (students must perceive they have access)
- honest/sincere/genuine
- continually strive for improvement
- engage the students in the teaching/learning process
- willing to admit mistakes and limitations (don't bluff...not afraid to admit you don't have all the answers...desire to find the answers you don't have)
- develop programs and classroom exercises with practical application (especially important to adult learners)
- always prepared (motto: come prepared...or don't come at all)
- clearly defined objectives (select course materials, assignments, examinations and techniques which relate to and reinforce the objectives)
- good time-managers (plan course from beginning to end)
- provide prompt feedback to students
- clearly articulate your expectations of students
- clearly articulate what students can expect from you in return

Characteristics of a Good Teacher Continued

- provide students with a meaningful course syllabus
- use the very first class meeting wisely (this session sets the tone for the whole course)
- objective/fair-minded

Techniques to improve teaching:

- begin by reviewing characteristics above
- recall the good teachers you have had - emulate them where appropriate
- seek the advice of colleagues -discuss teaching with them
- observe other teachers in action
- ask colleagues to visit your class and offer positive suggestions for improvement
- attend seminars designed to help improve teaching effectiveness
- familiarize yourself with the literature on teaching effectiveness
- identify someone whom you respect as a teacher who is willing to serve as a mentor (especially helpful technique to someone new to teaching)
- obtain feedback from your students (I am personally not threatened by student evaluations. I have become a better teacher by considering their input.)
- spend adequate time in preparation
- be willing to experiment with different techniques
- constantly work to improve communication and interpersonal relationship skills
- remain current with the state-of-the-art in your subject area(s)
- think of yourself as a coach

Characteristics of adult learners (please refer to handout):

- goal-oriented
- self-directed
- often insecure (require great deal of encouragement)
- most likely to build from their own experience
- motivation generally high (same can be said for anxiety levels)

- employed, attending part-time, evening or weekend students
- diverse needs and interests
- learn at different paces
- multiple demands on their time (school not always #1 priority)
- may fear competition (poor self-concept or lack of confidence)
- may be "rusty" (out of classroom for years...need to rediscover good study habits)
- frequently inhibited and intimidated (need to be made to feel comfortable in the classroom environment)
- wear many hats and have multiple responsibilities, of which being a student and attending class is only one

Reasons adults return to school:

- seeking a career change
- need to improve self esteem
- financial necessity (need for higher paying job, suddenly sole family bread winner, etc.)
- seeking to improve quality of life
- desire to obtain specific skills or update existing skills
- professional development
- fulfillment of personal goals

Tips for teaching (please refer to handout prepared by Joyce Povlacs:

Please excuse the fact that some of these may be repetitious:

- Use the "sandwich" method:
    - begin class by telling students what you are going to tell them (brief overview)
    - then tell them
    - then tell them what you have told them (concise summary)
- come prepared

- Five step approach:
  - state the objective
  - provide reason for the objective
  - discuss how objective will be reached
  - consider the value of learning the objective
  - work it through together
- discover something interesting about each student
- learn their names and call them by name
- be creative and compassionate
- be accessible to students before and after class
- be a role model
- be aware of their needs and shape the learning environment to meet those needs
- provide purposeful information
- involve the students in the process
- have each student introduce themselves at the first class and provide some information about themselves (helps build a sense of community within the classroom)
- plan exercises and assignments to reinforce course objectives
- sponsor a support group for non-traditional students...vehicle for bringing adults together (outside the formal classroom) to discuss issues of mutual concern
- find something good to say about each student's work
- bring varied experiences to the classroom...don't become too predictable
- constantly cultivate communication/interpersonal skills
- REMEMBER RULE NUMBER 1: HAVE FUN!!!!!

Obviously none of these lists are exhaustive. No doubt other ideas have come to mind as you have gone through the list. At any rate, I am genuinely impressed with what we were able to accomplish collectively in only one hour. Given more time, our next step would have been to develop a plan of action, building on these ideas.

Thanks again for your support and cooperation. Best wishes as you continue the quest for excellence.